

No doubt physical fragility was a further  
cause of his  
irresolution, of the morbidity that sometimes  
mars his  
work, of the lapses from faith that he  
bewails.

How should I praise thee, Lord! how should  
my rymes  
Gladly engrave thy love in steel  
If what my soul doth feel sometimes  
My soul might ever feel.

Although there were some fourtie heav'ns,  
or more,  
Sometimes I peere above them all;  
Sometimes I hardly reach a score;  
Sometimes to hell I fall.

But, after all, if such heart-searchings racked  
his life, they  
were often the making of his poetry. That  
alone matters  
now. Herbert had that indefinable gift for  
phrase and  
image which enabled him to wring  
sweetness out of his  
own weakness, as well as out of his strength.  
The mind  
behind these poems is, indeed, less strong  
than delicate—  
subde yet simple, sensible yet illogical, clever  
but not  
profound. Herbert plays with Donne's  
crooked and  
twisted weapons, but he does not strike  
home. He was at  
bottom neither mystic nor metaphysical;—  
simply a typical  
English figure, pacing sedately between the  
rose-beds of  
Wilton Hall and the vegetables of the  
vicarage, with a  
great deal of the homely practical sense of  
Englishmen,  
with a litde too much, perhaps, of the gende  
sweetness of  
some Englishwomen. This practical side is  
clear enough  
in him: it would be hard even to imagine  
Vaughan or  
Crashaw making collections of popular saws,  
like *Jacuk*  
*Prudentum*, or versifying them, as in *The*  
*Church-Porch*.

But though he liked common sense, he does  
not give the  
impression of greedily enjoying common  
humanity. No  
doubt he was an exemplary parson; no doubt  
he practised  
his own precept of visiting his flock and  
finding them  
'most naturally as they are, wallowing in the  
midst of  
their affairs'; but one of the most striking  
things about his